

How to Bring Down a Giant by Yarrow Stronski

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Summary: A fleshed out backstory for our favorite Sheriff. It's a WIP, so it may be reuploaded at some point. T for implications of a sexual nature and alcohol abuse.

How to Bring Down a Giant

Jim Hopper was good at what he did. He wasn't on the best beat, with all the best busts, but he was good. Murder was the norm in the city - by knife, by gun, or by various tactile methods. Hopper had seen it all. Death was a better partner than the guy he was with now. Laurens Steadman. One of the laziest, most complacent nobodies to ever wear a badge, at least by Hopper's estimate. The guy would look at the scene with little to no regard to detail. If protocol was followed, nothing more need be done.

"Guy's dead," he'd drawl, "We can't bring him back to life."

Jim, by contrast, was the eager young (-ish) upstart on the force. He was reckless, ignoring crimescene inspection protocol to instead crouch in a coagulated pool of blood, staring at the chipped floor moulding. Was it about the size of a tooth? Had the man really fallen face-forward, as he was laying here? Or was he moved? His tooth wasn't chipped, was it? Where was the coroner's report? Steadman was nothing if not too complacent to impede Hopper.

That rogueish quality, that devil-may-care look at caring-like-the-devil for those so recently deceased, is what drew Diane to him in the first place. And him to her. They'd met while he was looking for a quick fling. It was all Jim had time for, being that he volunteered to be on-call so often. They'd both liked Chinese food and the same brand of beer (Jim was just surprised she liked beer at all). He saw in her an openness, a caring quality that he figured he had, too. She was by turns terrified and in awe of the stories Hopper had to tell her. She was impulsive, fiery, and all-consuming. And he needed her in his life.

"Guns are lazy," she'd told him once, with a cheeky glance as they walked home from a bar; the very bar in which they'd met, "No, you really have to dig your hands into somebody if you want to kill. Go for the heart, you know?" She must have seen the concern in his eyes, because she grabbed him by the arm and laughed, "Jimmy, I'm kidding. I just figured you'd been desensitized, you know?" She stumbled over 'desensitized.' She'd had too much to drink.

But so had Jim, and that was the first night they spent together. It was messy, and he fumbled over nearly everything. The mix of booze and his sheer size ended up relegating him to the bottom, which he realized he shouldn't complain about, as the view was absolutely stunning.

That morning she was up, cleaning and fussing. She fed his dog (he'd forgotten before he'd gone out), and left a trail of sparkling wood and carpet behind her. His clothes were folded at the foot of his bed, his ashtray emptied, and the food containers that were too many days old were thrown not just in the trash, but in the dumpster outside his apartment.

And that was how Jim Hopper figured he'd have to work to make her his.

It started with working out. He'd wrestled back in high school, so he was beefy, but he wanted to get trim for her. She noticed him running one day and laughed. "It's just how you're built." He stopped trying a week later.

Then came cleaning. He tried to pick up after himself, leave fewer Chinese food containers around before she visited. But she'd tutted at his clumsy attempts, and cleaned up after him regardless. She was his everything in less than a month, and he made it his mission in life to make sure she knew.

"Jim," She intoned one day over breakfast, practically swimming in the shirt she'd borrowed to sleep in, "You gotta quit sending flowers to my work. The other girls are getting jealous." She was a secretary, nothing fancy, but she liked it and it brought in some money.

"I'll stop sending you flowers the day you marry me." He smiled around a cigarette. It was dopey, he knew, but he figured she'd be charmed. And for once in their relationship, he was right.

"Fine. If that's what I have to do to get you to quit." She plucked the cig from his mouth and took a drag, before rubbing it out in the ashtray between them. "I'll marry you."

And the whirlwind didn't stop. Within a year of the marriage, they

had a kid. Beautiful, sweet, boisterous Sarah. She was an adventurer, like her father. She crawled where she shouldn't, then toddled where she shouldn't, until she was running and giggling as Jim was forced to keep up. Every time he caught her, held her against him as she squirmed and begged him to let her go, laughing, his heart swelled. More than being a cop, his purpose in life was to raise this little girl to the best of his ability. With Diane by his side, he knew it was possible. Jim felt invincible.

And that's why, at eight years old, Sarah couldn't have cancer. That wasn't a kid's disease. She was too young. She couldn't. She couldn't.

"What would you like me to read you, sweetheart?" She was weak, but smiled nonetheless.

"Anne of Green Gables." She pleaded. It was her favorite, and Hopper knew it. He read to her every day. After treatment was especially difficult for her, and she would cry silently on his shoulder as he wrapped a protective arm around her. Diane would look on, devastation overshadowing anything else she may have been feeling. There was no recovering from cancer. They knew as soon as Sarah was diagnosed that she was dying. And it showed at home.

"You couldn't wait." Hopper grit his teeth. "She's not even dead yet and you're looking for a new kid?" He knew Diane was a physical person. He was, too. But those moments of intimacy were enveloped by Death looming in the horizon. He couldn't keep it up, and he wasn't sure he wanted to.

"Jimmy," she half-whispered. "I just... need you here. Right here." She tried to wrap her arms around him, tiny branches around a massive trunk. But Hopper stood, half-dressed, and left. He pulled on a shirt and a jacket and headed to the bar where the two of them had first met. He drank that night. Heavily. Whiskey. It took him down to the level he wanted, quickly and efficiently.

He passed out on the couch that night. Diane didn't say anything about it in the morning, but she didn't say anything at all that morning. She left for work with just a note by the door: "I love you."

The getting drunk thing became a nightly ritual. Hopper could see

the concern give way to disdain sometime around the end of the first month.

"I need to go," she said one night, her suitcase in hand. "Just for a few days. To my mom's or something." And with that she slipped out of Jim's clumsy grasp. He stood for a good few minutes staring at the closed door.

The night she came back was worse than the night she left.

"You didn't go to your mom's. I called her. She hadn't seen you. Where were you?" Diane hadn't answered at first, her eyes downcast. "Where were you?" He asked quietly. The intensity was there, but the swaying undermined it. When again, Diane didn't respond, Hopper snapped. "Where were you?" He cried out desperately. And he saw it. On her neck.

She opened her mouth, but he didn't need to hear it. He turned away from her, vision blurring. She left sometime that week. He wasn't sure when.

The emptiness in the apartment mocked him, and he decided it was time to move. Steadman clapped him on the back and wished him well.

"Where are you going?" Everybody asked.

"I dunno. Somewhere quiet." He smiled.

"Hawkins, maybe."